NORTH YEMEN

NEW CIVIL WAR IN NORTH YEMEN

For many years, the imamate of Yemen was largely ignored by European and Arab nations alike. In the 19th century, Britain had taken the port of Aden and a large chunk of Yemeni territory along the Indian Ocean, but the imams in Sanaa were then allowed to rule undisturbed and to insulate their kingdom from the outside world. However, in 1962, the status quo was dramatically reversed when nationalist army officers overthrew the imam al Badr and proclaimed a republic. Royalist forces, with help from Saudi Arabia and Britain, soon began a civil war against the new regime, whose supporters received extensive military aid from Egypt. As the civil war continued, the people of Aden and occupied South Yemen intensified the struggle against British rule, under the leadership of the National Liberation Front.

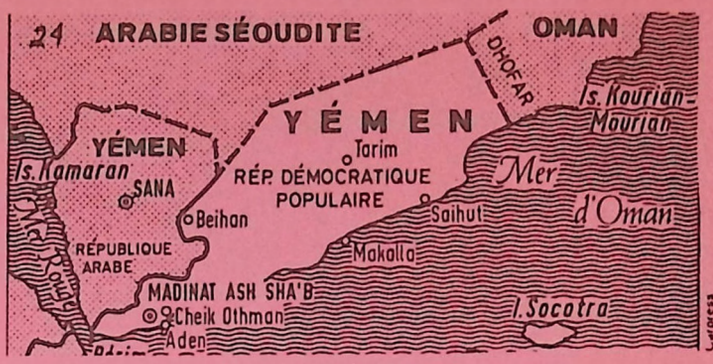
In November, 1967, a coup d'etat in the North brought to power the cadi Abder Rahman Iryani, who brought about a conciliation with the royalists and their Saudi backers. Following the seizure of power by the revolutionary wing of the National Liberation Front in Aden and South Yemen, many opponents of the new regime fled to the North and used it as a base for continual attacks upon the new People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Because the existence of the PDRY radically altered the "strategic balance" of the Red Sea area, the exiles were able to obtain lavish support from the Iryani regime, Saudi Arabia, Britain, and the United States. However, domestic opponents of the cadi have been a serious obstacle to this counter-revolutionary alliance.

In September, 1972, the conflict along the border between the "two Yemens" escalated sharply, but the peasant militias of the PDRY successfully beat back a series of offensives from the North. Two months later, a cease-fire was signed in Cairo, and the two countries agreed to take steps toward political unification---a demand that the National Liberation Front had advanced since the earliest days of its struggle against the British.

During the past year, the ceasefire and the unification agreement have provided notable advantages for progressive forces within the North, and, by extension for the PDRY. Marc Pellas, writing in *Le monde diplomatique* (August 28, 1973), has described the situation as follows:

"The revolutionary forces of North Yemen are certainly less numerous than those of the army and the tribes. But their consolidation in many parts of the country and the gains they have made have already permitted regroupment of progressive forces---combattants and non-combattants---including a good proportion of the nationalist republicans who have abandoned the idea of making peace with a repressive regime whose short-term policies seem clearly aligned with the interests of Riyadh and Washington."

SCHOOL IN LIBERATED DHOFAR



LE SUD DE LA PÉNINSULE ARABE.
La tension croît de jour en jour.

The regroupment of forces opposed to foreign domination has been accompanied by an intensification of armed actions against the regime and the creation of liberated areas within North Yemen. At the same time, the regime itself has experienced important internal crises, such as the resignation of Prime Minister Mohsen al Aini last December. Having opposed Saudi proposals that increased wages for North Yemen's army be paid directly by the Saudi embassy in Sanaa, al Aini stepped down. Since then, his successor, Abdullah al Hirji, has entered such overt collaboration with Saudi Arabia that the regime's domestic base of support has been heavily compromised.

Al Hirji has not only accepted more than $25 million in Saudi military aid, but has ceded portions of North Yemen's territory to King Feisal. He has also permitted Saudi forces to occupy the important Red Sea island of Kamaran, whose inhabitants had voted to unite with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Now, a permanent Saudi base is being built on Kamaran.

All military matters of the regime are tightly directed by a Saudi "committee" based not in Sanaa, but in Riyadh. One of its members is a permanent American military "adviser." A special communications system links Faisal's palace in Riyadh with the Sanaa headquarters of North Yemen's chief of staff. Aside from the regular army of North Yemen, the Saudis oversee large "irregular forces," consisting of North Yemeni tribes and exiled reactionaries from the South. For operations against progressives inside North Yemen, the Saudis also rely upon a special death-squad, called *Sabaa*, which has carried out hundreds of assassinations and is responsible for torturing of political prisoners.

King Feisal's support is accompanied by Iranian advisers for al Hirji's security services; moreover, Iran has provided large quantities of arms purchased from Israel. Other contributors to the regime range from Kadhafi's Libya to Franco's Spain, but the United States is, by far, the most prodigious. In the past year, American aid has exceeded $60 million, with the major portion destined for renovation of the regime's army. During the renovation process, 144 army officers suspected of nationalist sentiments have been removed from their posts, and some have been executed.

Concurrent with the escalation of foreign support to the cadi Abdullah al Harji, there have been thousands of assassinations and executions. In May, 1200 persons were arrested in Sanaa following the assassination of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Othman, a cabinet minister. Although the Sanaa regime attempted to attribute his death to "commando infiltrators" from the PDRY, it is probable that the sheikh was executed by guerrillas belonging to the Organization of Revolutionary Yemenite Resisters, which has been carrying out military operations against the regime since 1970. Recently, the ORYR has created a common military organization with the Yemenite Democratic Revolutionary Party. On May 26, the two groups stated their common objectives to be:

1) Struggle against the feudalists and comprador bourgeoisie, and defense of liberated areas.

2) Recovery of the lands stolen by Saudi Arabia and creation of a democratic people's republic.

3) Accomplishment of the unification of the "two Yemens" in the interests of the working classes.

In an interview published in *Afrique-Asie* (July 9, 1973) Abu Shehab, an ORYR spokesman stated that heavy fighting had taken place at the end of May in the central region of North Yemen. Government casualties exceeded one hundred, including two high officials and several tribal chieftains. Now, there is intensified emphasis upon formation of a national front that would include other organizations which politically oppose the al Harji regime, including the Labor Party, the Democratic People' Unity Party, and the two Yemeni wings of the Ba'ath.

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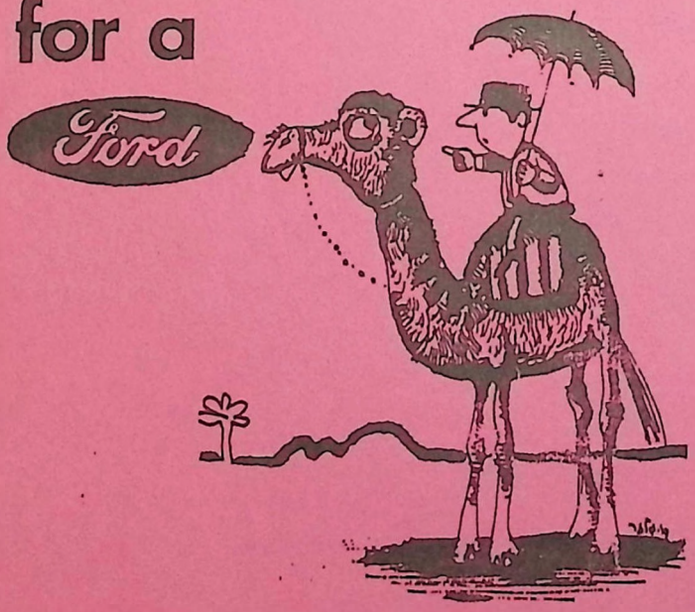
Against North Yemen's revolutionary forces, the many-membered reactionary alliance (the regime, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Libya, Israel, Britain, the United States, and others) constitutes a powerful obstacle. An escalation of the present civil war is likely this autumn, since October 28 marks the end of the one-year "transitional period" established in the 1972 cease-fire agreement between the two Yemens. The persistent campaign of the al-Harji regime and its foreign sponsors to sabotage unification and to crush nationalist forces in the north has led directly to the present juncture. Abdul Fattah Ismail, secretary general of the ruling National Front in People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, has indicated that the deepening conflict to the North can end in only one of two ways:

"The common point of the reactionary forces is that they oppose unity for Yemen and even unity within North Yemen. In this conflict, there are only two possible solutions: either control of all Yemen by the feudalists, or else a taking of power by the patriotic movement in the North which would produce a democratic unification of the two parts of the country."

Material for the above article was drawn, in particular, from *"Yemen du Nord"* by Marc Pellas and from *"Une situation explosive"* by Sherif Rashid in Afrique-Asie, July 9, 1973.

My Kingdom for a



The Sultanate of Oman, a beautiful backward state in Southern Arabia, is the latest recruit to the Arab League and the United Nations. But its admission to the League was not swift.

The trouble was that the Imam Ghaleb bin Ali, who led a revolt in 1955 against Sultan Said bin Taimour, was recognised as the rightful ruler of Oman by many Arabs. Though the old Sultan had been succeeded by his son, Sultan Qabus, there was still some doubt whether he was widely accepted as the real ruler.

It was therefore necessary for one of them to acknowledge the sovereignty of the other. So the Imam met the representatives of the Sultan.

For hours the Sultan's men did the talking, the Imam just listened. Alas, no progress.

Then came the breakthrough: the Imam, in his headdress and flowing robes, held up an imperious hand. " I will return to Oman," he said, " and swear allegiance to Sultan Qabus on two conditions." " Excellent," said the Arab League officials, " and those conditions are...?"

The Imam ticked them off on two raised fingers:" One: that I should have the Coca-Cola agency. Two:that I should have the Ford agency."

The League officials admitted Oman to membership, pronto. Under Sultan Qabus.

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